

Aldo Leopold in his book, *A Sand County Almanac*, speaks about the need for a land ethic. He says very beautifully what this means in sort of a logical chain of deductions.

*"A land ethic then reflects the existence of an ecological conscience." For us this means viewing the farm as a living, interdependent system with diversity of crops and livestock, wildlife and forest, insects and birds, microbes and fungi.*

*"This in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land." This responsibility has to express itself in striving to leave the land in better health than what we found it in.*

*"Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal." Self-renewal is the capacity of the land to regenerate itself through the diversity of farming practices that are employed on a healthy farm. These many different practices on all healthy farms are the threads that help bind the quilt that makes up each farm in a region, all using many of the same threads but all having a different quilt design.*

Much of the success of a healthy farm depends on keeping the loop or the quilt design closed as much as possible so that the pattern repeats itself in the form of resilience, resistance and self-renewal. This is one of the principles that guides the raising of healthy breeds of crops, livestock, and people for that matter.

Leopold finishes by saying, *"Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity for self-renewal."* So it logically follows that we should all be conservationists.

Let me finish by saying that we need to find more and new ways to bring about self-renewal, not just for our soil, which so often narrowly defines conservation. We need to find new ways to conserve and renew people and rural communities, local food economies, neighborliness and interdependence with one another.

Thank you so much for this honor. It means a great deal to our family.